

be put to death. Pilate is not willing to accept such generalization and proceeds to an examination of the prisoner.

Verses 33-37. The Jews had condemned Jesus to death for the crime of blasphemy, but a charge of blasphemy before Pilate would have very little weight. So they shifted the charge from that of blasphemy to treason. They accused Jesus of claiming to be a king. This surprised Pilate very much. The pitiable condition in which he appeared before the governor was in marked contrast with the kingly state. Yet Jesus never showed himself more a king than he did while on trial. Before answering Pilate's question, Jesus wants to know whether he speaks of a kingdom from the secular point of view or from the standpoint of the Jewish Messianic hopes and prophecies. In a sneering way Pilate asks, "Am I a Jew?" By which he means that he does not know anything about the Jewish hopes and prophecies, and when he speaks of a kingdom he means a political kingdom.

Verses 38-40. Pilate regarded Jesus as nothing more than a harmless dreamer, an enthusiast, in whom he found nothing worthy of death. He offers therefore to release him, but the Jews call for the release of Barabbas, a thief and a murderer, and that Christ be crucified. Pilate finally yields to the demands of the Jews, but washes his hands and declares himself free from the blood of the innocent man which they were about to shed. By seven different witnesses is the faultlessness of Jesus established: 1. He is declared innocent by the false disciple who betrayed him (Matt. 27:4). 2. Found "not worthy of death" by the cruel king who set him at naught and betrayed him (Luke 23:11-15). 3. Declared "a just man" by the wife of the ruler (Matt. 27:19). 4. Declared to be without fault, by the weak governor who slew him. 5. The thief who was condemned with him said, "This man hath done nothing amiss." (Luke 23:41). 6. The centurion who stood at his cross cried, "Truly, this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). 7. We have the Father's testimony in the midday darkness, the opened graves, the resurrection.

#### The Lesson Applied

1. The Jews would not set their feet on a Gentile floor for fear of defilement, yet at that very moment they were crying for the blood of the sinless Son of God. They did not hesitate to become partners in the murder of Jesus, but to go into the judgment hall, that their conscience would not allow. How unsafe it is to follow conscience, or rather what an unsafe guide it may become. There are people now who swallow a camel yet choke at a gnat. They want to be very genteel, very particular about the little things of life, all of which is proper, but the weightier matters of the law should not be neglected. Our best behavior can not atone for the envy, jealousy and bitterness in the heart.

2. The verdict of Pilate has been the

verdict of all the generations since the time that Jesus was delivered up to be crucified. There has not been a flaw found in his character. To the question, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" the Jews made no answer for the very good reason that they could not. He had never injured any one, but hundreds were ready to testify of the good he had done. He had healed the sick, raised the dead, taught the ignorant. He went about doing good. His life was a perpetual blessing to all about him. After almost twenty centuries Jesus yet stands forth the sublimest, the purest, the finest character in human or divine history, absolutely without a parallel in the world's annals. The microscope of historic criticism has been turned on his character, but it has only served to reveal more clearly the spotless and sinless character of Christ.

3. Pilate from first to last made an effort to evade the responsibility of passing sentence on Jesus. He knew him to be innocent, but instead of boldly declaring the prisoner innocent and refusing to shed the blood of this just person he tried simply to get clear of the case by evasion. He could not do it. Tho he washed his hands and declared himself innocent of the blood of Jesus, yet with it all Jesus stands before him and awaits his decision. "What then shall I do with Jesus?" was one of the perplexing questions of which Pilate could not rid himself. Today the creeds of Christendom continue to repeat, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate." It is so yet. The Lord stands before every human soul, and demands reception or rejection. It is an awful thing that a decision *must* be made. The responsibility can not be evaded. To refuse to accept Jesus is to reject him. Refusing to decide at all is also to reject him. There is positively no way of getting clear of the issue. It forces itself upon each one.

#### Heart Talks

Selected.

To us who know so well who Jesus is—the Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords—his trial before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate is a strange sight. Think of it! Weak and wicked men, whom he could have destroyed with one word of his power, passed judgment upon him as upon a common criminal. Nothing but their mad hate could have prevented their seeing the majesty of him whom they contemptuously accused of treason because he would not deny that he was their King. It is a startling disclosure of the possibilities of spiritual blindness, of the utter darkness of the soul when it refuses the light of God.

Pilate was impressed with Jesus. He could find in him no fault at all; but because he wanted to make it easy for himself by keeping favor with the Jews, against his own convictions he delivered him to them to be crucified. It was Christ's own people who first rejected him and carried him to Pilate, the Gentile, for confirmation of their sentence. Jew and Gentile alike were stone-

blind through the selfishness which is the curse of human souls in all ages. The Jews hated Jesus because his teachings cut to the core of their Pharisaic self-righteousness. Pilate saw no reason to condemn him, but thought it was for his own interest to do what the Jews demanded.

Do we behold, as in a mirror, a reflection of ourselves? We really are in danger of spiritual blindness ourselves from the same causes. The truth of Jesus often cuts us to the heart as a two-edged sword. It goes into our self-will, our pride, our ambitions, and we resist and resent it. We want our own way, and we will not have him to reign over us. We are willing to accept his reign if it does not interfere with our purposes and plans, but not if it asks the unconditional surrender of our hearts and lives. And we see no fault in Jesus. We admire his truth, and give it an intellectual assent; but to stand boldly by what we know is right would interfere with worldly prosperity—would forfeit the friendship of some, would make it hard to get along with those who do not believe as we do. And so we yield our convictions and wash our hands of responsibility. There is no surer way than this of becoming spiritually blind. It is a fearful risk. We may even be in the strange position of those of whom we say, "How blind they were!" and betray and crucify again our King and our Judge.

Let us take the lesson to our hearts. Selfishness has many forms. It always hinders our seeing spiritual truth in a clear light. Only the Christ, whose meekness, kindness, and love shine like royal diamonds in the scenes of this lesson, dwelling in our hearts, can destroy this secret and subtle foe. We see no fault in him at all. But, O, the great question for us is, Will he at the last find us "faultless in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy?"

## Church News

#### Kanemorado Echoes

Since our last we have encountered rain and storm, much to the detriment of our work, but we do not feel to yield to any of these things. "All things work together for good to those who love the Lord." On Tuesday evening of April 18, we commenced meetings at Star school house, northwest of South Haven, had but little meeting first week on account of rain. Did some house to house work, and was called during the week to Narden, a town about eighteen miles south in the Oklahoma territory to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord, a dear sister who was very sick, and at this writing, but little hope is entertained for her recovery. Our second week was more favorable, but corn planting claimed most of the people, yet the meetings grew in interest up to May 1, when the heavy rains again brought everything to a standstill. Held a love feast on the evening of the 3rd of May, a very interesting meeting, the first of the kind held